

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

LINDA D. FINDLAY,  
*Chair, American Copper Policy Council.*

The American Copper Policy Council's members include the Copper Development Association, the Copper and Brass Fabricators Council, the Copper and Brass Servicenter Association, the International Copper Association, the National Electrical Manufacturers Association, Rio Tinto, and Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold, Inc.

I yield back the balance of my time, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Chairman, on January 28, 1872, Representative Sergeant brought to the House floor from the Committee on Mines and Mining H.R. 1016, the bill that was to be enacted as the Mining Law of 1872. He noted that debate had taken place whether it was worthwhile for the government to sell the mineral lands of the United States, some thought, on some idea of a royalty belonging to the government.

Instead, the Members debating that measure decided to allow for the patenting of mining claims for \$2.50 or \$5 an acre, depending on whether it was allowed to place their claim because, in the words of Representative Sergeant, "We are inducing miners to purchase their claims so that large amounts of money are thereby brought into the Treasury of the United States."

Well, now, perhaps back then \$2.50 an acre represented a large amount of money. But I submit it does not today. And the royalty debated back when this law was passed is what, ironically, we are debating today.

Now, the gentleman from New Mexico has said that in order to pay that \$2.50 an acre you have to mine the land. I would say that that is an inaccurate description of current law. You do not necessarily have to mine the land. You have to show that there's a valuable mineral that exists therein, which is not a very hard proposition to show these days.

With that noted, let me state that I've engaged in the effort to reform the Mining Law of 1872 these past many years, not just for the apparent reasons, valuable minerals mined for free, the threats to health and human safety from abandoned mine lands, but also because I am pro-mining, I come from a coal mining State, because I no longer believe that we can expect a viable hardrock mining industry to exist on public domain lands in the future if we do not make corrections to the law today.

I do so because there are provisions of the existing law which impede efficient and serious mineral exploration and development. And I do so because of the unsettled political climate governing this activity. With reform, if not coming in a comprehensive fashion, certainly it will continue to come on a piecemeal basis.

As my colleagues come to the floor to vote on this issue, I hope they will ask their staffs just how many letters from how many mining groups have

they received in opposition to the pending bill. I hope they'll bring those letters to the floor with them, because I submit there will not be many. And I submit the reason may be, using my intuition, could the responsible segments of the hardrock mining industry, which is the majority, could the responsible segment of that hardrock mining industry want to end the uncertainty that exists over this industry? Could it be that they want a finality to the arguments surrounding their industry? Could it be that they want a basis upon which to make business and future investment decisions?

And hardly today are they screaming pauper. Look at this week's Wall Street Journal headline: "Gold Rush of 2007, Mining Mergers."

The price is pretty well up there these days. I think these companies are doing quite well, and they would like to have some finality on this issue. I believe that, with enough courage, as we've seen from elected officials, hunters, sportsmen, fishermen from across the West, we can continue to address the problems facing mining and dovetail our need for minerals with the necessity of protecting our environment.

For at stake here in this debate over the Mining Law of 1872 is the health, welfare, and environmental integrity of our people and on our Federal lands. At stake is the public interest of all Americans. And at stake is the ability of the hardrock mining industry to continue to operate on public domain lands in the future to produce those minerals that are necessary to maintain our standard of living.

I urge the adoption of this legislation.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. I rise in very strong support of H.R. 2262, and I congratulate its sponsor, Chairman NICK RAHALL.

The Hardrock Mining and Reclamation Act of 2007 will finally end the give-away of our public lands and minerals. The bill secures a fair return for taxpayers on minerals taken from public lands, and it will provide for environmental standards and cleanup for hardrock mining.

For 135 years, American hardrock mining policy has given away public resources, and it has left each new generation a larger legacy of unreclaimed lands and degraded streams.

The 1872 mining law is long overdue for comprehensive reform.

The American taxpayers deserve an updated mining policy, and so does our natural environment.

Chairman RAHALL and I have been striving to update this antiquated law for decades, and thanks to his leadership, we are closer today to success than we have ever been.

The Natural Resources Committee's effort to reform mining law began in the early 1990s, when I chaired the committee, but we were derailed by the Republican rule.

Chairman RAHALL has spent 20 years introducing bills in this House to get to this point. He has persevered against indifference, opposition, and intensive lobbying.

Today, he has brought a bill to the floor of the House that takes a major step towards reform after many long years of struggle.

The 1872 mining law allows mining companies to take billions of dollars worth of gold, silver and other minerals from public lands for free.

We no longer treat any other resource that way—not coal, oil, or gas—yet under the archaic mining law, we still give away gold with no compensation to the taxpayers who own it.

And over the years, the price tag for mining cleanup has risen astronomically. Since the House last acted on reform legislation, more than 20 mines and mills have been added to the Superfund National Priority List.

The EPA Inspector General has warned of nearly \$24 billion in cleanup costs for mine sites, some of which will require treatment "in perpetuity."

The 1872 law's failings have had a serious impact on California and the West. The mining law has remained in effect while Northern California's Iron Mountain mine spewed out nearly a quarter of the copper and zinc discharged by industries to the Nation's surface waters; as historic lands of the Indian Pass area in the southern California desert faced destruction from the proposed Glamis mine; during decades of efforts to control acidic, metal-laden discharges from an old sulfur mine southeast of Tahoe; and as the city of Grass Valley spends millions to treat hazardous mine discharges and fight a giant mining corporation in court.

The bill that is before us today, the Hardrock Mining and Reclamation Act of 2007, will: put certain irreplaceable public lands off limits to mining, secure a fair return for taxpayers with a royalty on minerals taken from public lands, halt the sale of public lands to mining claimholders, adopt modern environmental standards for hardrock mining; and establish a program to clean up abandoned mines.

I congratulate the chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, NICK RAHALL, and Energy Subcommittee Chairman JIM COSTA, our California colleague, for their leadership on this issue.

I also want to commend the staff of the Natural Resources committee for their years of hard work to get us to this point.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this major legislative accomplishment, which will be celebrated by future generations of Americans.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of this important legislation.

As a proud cosponsor of the bill, I want to begin by congratulating Chairman RAHALL, the lead sponsor of H.R. 2262 and our leader on the Natural Resources Committee, for all he has done to make it possible for the House to consider the bill today.

For many years, he has worked to replace the ancient mining law of 1872 with a statute more attuned to this era than to the days of the Grant administration—a worthy task that remains unfinished through no fault of his.

For him, it is personal. And it is personal for me as well.

My uncle, Stewart Udall, had the honor of serving as Secretary of the Interior during the administrations of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. During his tenure, he accomplished a great deal, but he wanted to do more. He has often said that reform of the mining law of 1872 was the biggest unfinished business on the Nation's natural resources agenda, and